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SPEECH

OF

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MR. J. C. ALFORD, OF GEORGIA,

ON

ABOLITION PETITIONS.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JANUARY 22, 1840.



WASHINGTON.

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## SPEECH.

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Mr. Speaker : I am pleased that I have at last obtained the floor, and have an opportunity of expressing my views in this Hall on this most important question—a question to my constituents of the deepest interest ; one that strikes at the existence of the Union.

I will not evade the question. If my friend from South Carolina, (Mr. THOMPSON) does not intend by his proposition to *reject* the *reception*, I will offer an amendment that shall bring the question directly before the House, and compel this body to decide whether they will or will not receive these petitions. The gentleman signifies his intention is to refuse to receive these petitions ; such was my opinion of the object of the resolutions, and under that view of the question I support the amendment.

I will meet this question at once on what its friends are pleased to call in this debate *high constitutional grounds*. Congress has no constitutional right or power to receive these abolition petitions ; and let me say to gentlemen, in all truth and sincerity, that if they decide, in violation of that sacred instrument, that they shall be received, I will say to my constituents, from my heart and soul, that they have no longer any use for this Union. It will then be to them an engine of the most diabolical oppression. I am ready to say this to them whenever gentlemen are ready to decide the question in favor of reception. I place the issue on their reception, and will proceed to demonstrate, on constitutional principles, that Congress has no right to receive, to consider, to report upon, or to grant the prayer of these petitions.

What is the object of these petitions ? What do they pray for ? Some of them go to abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia ; some to abolish it in the Territories, and some in the States ; and some pray that no new State shall be admitted into the Union if the Constitution authorize the institution of slavery. It is in this broad sense I am about to consider the proposition. What says the Constitution ? Let us look to that. I have not come here to appeal to the North, the East, or the West, as men, to protect our rights. I appeal to no men, or set of men—to no party, Whig or Democrat—but I plant myself upon the Constitution of my country, the only basis upon which I am willing to stand. Were it not for this

Constitution, I would advise my constituents to go back to first principles ; were it not for the protection guarantied to them by this Constitution to enjoy their rights of property, as well as their private and political rights, I should tell them to protect themselves with their own strong arm. And if gentlemen doubt our ability to do so, let them look at this right arm of mine. But we have this Constitution, and gentlemen say they claim the right to present and consider these petitions under that clause which provides that " Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." I will not say that one man cannot petition as well as another, but I do mean to say that every one must petition for *his own* grievance. And I contend that slavery is no grievance. And if it were, it is no grievance of these petitioners, living as they do in *States* where slavery is not tolerated by law. Each State of the Union has a Constitution of its own; and in the Southern States slavery is authorized by law. Each State legislates for its own people; and the people of one State have no interest in or right to control the legislation of another State, in regard to this question especially.

The right of property held by the master in his servant in Georgia, according to the laws of Georgia, can be no grievance to the citizen of Maine; nor is there any thing repugnant to this right of property in slaves in the Constitution of the United States; but on the contrary, the Constitution of the United States fully recognises this right of property in slaves, by just and ample provisions for the protection of our people in their domestic tranquillity. And, to insure the blessings of the relative condition of master and servant to us and our posterity, the framers of that instrument inserted a clause which authorized the importation of slaves into this country for many years after its adoption. Let the Constitution speak for itself:

" The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year eighteen hundred and eight; but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation not exceeding ten dollars for each person."

Thus it seems the Constitution contemplates the existence of slavery in the States through all time; and who now can say in truth that it was ever contemplated by the framers of the Constitution that the people of any part of this Confederacy—the ladies of the North—would send to Congress petitions to interfere with *our domestic tranquillity*—to interfere with our *right of property*, and claim that privilege of intermeddling in other people's business upon the ground that our lawful and constitutional rights are a grievance to them? The absurdity of receiving these petitions is obvious to all. To me the proposition seems to violate all the principles of constitutional law, as well as every sentiment of humanity and religion. This question can only be the legitimate subject of discussion among the slaveholding people



themselves. The General Government has no power, by the Constitution, over the subject. To receive these petitions would imply the power to grant their prayers. Congress has no such power. Hence the absurdity of their reception.

Not only did our fathers provide for our domestic tranquillity—not only did they authorize the importation of slaves into the States—but, knowing as they did, and believing as they must have believed, from the facts and circumstances of the times in which they lived, that the happiness of our people, their security, and the perpetuity of our Union, depended upon the preservation of the institutions of the South as they found them when they formed the Constitution of the United States, they, with that patriotism and wisdom which distinguished them above all other men who lived before them or will live after them, incorporated into that Constitution a clause declaring that three-fifths of this property shall be represented in the Congress of the United States.

What would the honorable gentleman from New York, (Mr. GRANGER,) with all his knowledge of the Constitution and with his ability in argument in favor of the right of petition on this question, think of a petition sent here from citizens of the South, praying that Congress would abolish the right of *representation* in New York, the empire State, and, if the gentleman please, in his own district? Yes, sir, what would he say if the ladies of the South were to petition Congress to infringe the right of representation in New York, to diminish the number of their Representatives, and disfranchise *his* constituents? I cannot foretell the kind or power of the resistance the distinguished gentleman would offer to such a palpable abuse of the right of petition, and such a violent infraction of constitutional law. Yet such is the course pursued towards the South, and the arguments of gentlemen on this floor justify it, and amongst these champions of the right of petition in this sense is to be found the honorable gentleman himself.

As I sat out to defend the interest of my constituents on constitutional principles, and as I declared in the outset that I would risk every thing with the Constitution, let us read it again, and see if it is not truly the ark of our political salvation :

“Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, *three-fifths of all other persons.*”

The abolition of slavery would, therefore, reduce the number of Representatives from the South to a very great extent, and would be a denial of the right of representation, a positive infraction of the right of representation authorized by the Constitution of the United States, exactly in proportion to the number of slaves represented upon this floor.

Gentlemen complain that, by reason of this representation of slaves, the South has a preponderance in the political scale. Is this the reason that they favor abolition? Is this the reason they vote to receive



these petitions? If so, they seek to rob us of our constitutional rights by unconstitutional measures; and the only means left us to escape the consequences of such a measure would be to go over to Mr. Van Buren's principles, and advocate the right of free negro suffrage; a measure which I detest, and one which my constituents will never submit to.

I ask again, is it right to receive petitions here which strike at the very foundation of federal representation? which go to dissolve the body politic by an infringement of the high privilege expressly secured to the South in the Constitution?

This principle of representation has been held sacred by the people of this country from the adoption of the Constitution, and by none more cherished than by the freemen of Georgia.

The history of Georgia politics places this right of representation in a strong point of view. By reference to the Journals of this House, there may be found a bold and eloquent argument in the case of Jackson against Wayne, made by James Jackson, of Georgia, a hero of the Revolution, and the father of the Republican party in Georgia, in favor of this sacred constitutional right of representation.

I cannot recur to a name so illustrious, to a man who fought so long and so valorously for freedom, to a Whig of the Revolution, without remembering one of the most prominent causes of that Revolution—a denial by the mother country of the right of representation; and shall we be less tenacious of the right than our fathers? Shall we surrender to a few fanatics, urged forward by an unholy zeal, a principle which our fathers refused to surrender to the arms of Europe, and maintained at the cannon's mouth? Never, I hope. God forbid it.

The member from Vermont (Mr. SLADE) made one admission which is fatal to his abolition doctrines—his right of petition. He says there are some things it would not be proper to petition for. One of his cases is, that it would be improper to petition this body to hang an abolitionist. I doubt not the gentleman had some forebodings of what his fate might be if he were to carry his principles into practical operation; in throwing this shield around himself, he has conceded the whole ground. And let me ask the gentleman if it would be less lawful or religious to hang him up to one of these pillars until he was dead, dead, than it would be to arm an incendiary with a torch in one hand and a dagger in the other, to burn my house and murder my family? Yet such is the criminal denunciation of some of these petitioners. They have had the madness to say that if they cannot abolish slavery by law, they will do it with the sword, or, what is worse, they send incendiary pamphlets into our country to excite our slaves to deeds of insurrectionary warfare.

Mr. Speaker, three years ago about this time, I met the honorable gentleman (Mr. GRANGER) on this floor, and when I attempted to reply to his defence of the gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ADAMS,) I was gagged down with the previous question. The gentleman, if I remember right, asked us to let them fight our battles at the North.

[Mr. GRANGER denied *he* had ever claimed to fight the battles of the South.]



Mr. ALFORD said, I am glad of it. I would not trust him or any Northern man to fight our battles with the abolitionists *alone*. Let those who would fight for us there, fight with us here. But I fear they are all Whigs, all Democrats, on this subject at home; all against slavery in the abstract. The South has been gulled long enough with this right of petition so sacred to the honorable gentleman. Of one thing I am certain: he said then, as he says now, that the North has rights and dare maintain them. The reception of these petitions under that clause of the Constitution already alluded to, which secures the right of petition for the redress of grievances, is not one of those rights to which his declaration applied. He should maintain no such a right. What are we to understand by this threat, that the North "has rights and dare maintain them?" We are to be taught, I suppose, that under the authority to petition Congress for a redress of *their* grievances, they will enforce upon us a reception of abolition petitions, and trample under their feet our rights of property and representation both.

They charge us with having mixed the right of petition with the question of abolition, and say that they will *dare* maintain that right, although they admit that they cannot abolish slavery at all, so long as the Constitution is in force. If they have no right to abolish slavery at all what right have they to trouble Congress with these petitions? The argument is absurd on the face of it. What means this declaration—this threat that they dare to do such deeds? Does the gentleman intend to carry this measure by force of arms? Are we to be swept away by the power of the North as with the besom of destruction? Is the South to fall by force without resistance?

I cannot contemplate the possibility of Congress entertaining these doctrines without feelings of horror. If ever this power is once carried out effectually, it will raise a fire of discord, it will light the torch of civil war, and the consuming element will sweep over this nation as the tempest sweeps over the ocean, as the ocean sweeps over the earth when driven by the fury of the warring elements. Before the howling of the tempest shall hush, and the fire of war blast out, the last son of the South shall perish a martyr to our constitutional rights.

Mr. Speaker, I now have in my eye the honorable gentleman from New York who did say three years ago (when, Democrat as he is, he stood by his colleague, Whig as he is, in defence of Mr. ADAMS) that the South should let the battle be fought at the North.

[Mr. VANDERPOEL inquired if Mr. ALFORD alluded to him.]

Mr. ALFORD said I allude to the leader of the Administration forces in this House, to him who *leads* with a whip, to the gentleman who represents Kinderhook—it is unparliamentary to call members by name—I allude to *him* who, when New Jersey was stricken from the roll of States, stood upon this floor and thanked God that the voice of democracy was triumphant in this House; that the voice of the Democratic party in New Jersey had been heard in this Hall. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the voice of democracy has been heard, and the gentleman rejoices at the fact, and speaks of regenerated States. That voice



of democracy which hails from New Jersey is not the voice of *her* people, but it is the voice of *aliens* carted about by Van Buren men to raise the hue and cry of modern democracy, of *O'Connell democracy*. Yes, sir, to raise a tumultuous shout of alien, O'Connell, democratic triumph over the native citizens and legal voters of a gallant State, speaking as they did in favor of the Opposition cause by their own people through the medium of a constitutional Government. But, sir, the voice of the sons of New Jersey cannot prevail; right yields to force, and the voice of law is drowned by a wild and disorderly shout of the mob, which is called here the voice of democracy—a voice that comes from the land of O'Connell, that breaks upon the shores of New Jersey, that rings through the spell-bound regions of the “enchanted mountains,” that wakes up the drowsy inhabitants of “Sleepy Hollow,” and they too hail the triumph of this cause of *regenerating democracy*, and join the shout of *that* democracy, echoed here by the “leader” of “the party” in this Hall.

[Mr. VANDERPOEL asked Mr. ALFORD to yield for an explanation.]

Mr. ALFORD said, after I am done. I found it too hard to get the floor to give it up. I cannot let go my *grip* until I have said what I have to say. I can tell the gentleman that, unless I am mistaken in the signs of the times, this modern democracy will soon come to an end. This Van Buren-Calhoun-Bentonian-Buchanan democracy will blow up at the end of Mr. Van Buren's eight years, if he is re-elected, I “guess.”

The SPEAKER interposed, and Mr. ALFORD said, *sit still*, Mr. Speaker, I will go back to argument.

I hold in my hand the most eloquent and conclusive argument in favor of the constitutional rights of the South on this question of slavery, and *against* the course pursued by these fanatics, I have seen or read; and, what is *astonishing* to all lovers of *truth* and *justice*, it in the very speech of William Henry Harrison from which *garbled extracts* have been made to prove him *an abolitionist*, and for which he has been doomed to encounter the united opposition of the whole South; and this same speech is now published in the *Emancipator*, under a long editorial denunciation of General Harrison as an *anti-abolitionist*, and declaring that no abolitionist can support him for the Presidency, because he goes with the South. And I am happy, sir, that whilst I use his speech to prove the truth of my position, I am but doing an act of justice to a *statesman* and a *patriot*, a friend of the South, who has been misrepresented and belied. Let not gentlemen suppose that I am about to become the advocate of General Harrison for the Presidency. Georgia stands on neutral ground. We have a man of our own—the immortal *Troup*—who is better qualified to administer the Government, in my opinion, than Harrison and Van Buren both put together. I go for Troup, sir; but if ever he is out of the question, I have a right to enjoy my own opinion as between the other two; and I am willing to judge them by their own acts, and choose between them upon their principles in regard to this very question.



I will now give General Harrison's views as authority on this question. Hear them :

*“Extract from remarks of General William Henry Harrison at the Public Dinner given to him by the citizens of Vincennes, Indiana, on the 25th May, 1835.*

“I have now, fellow-citizens, a few words more to say to you on another subject; and which is, in my opinion, of more importance than any other that is now in the course of discussion in any part of the Union. I allude to the societies which have been formed, and the movements of certain individuals in some of the States in relation to a portion of the population in others. The conduct of these persons is the more dangerous, because the object is masked under the garb of disinterestedness and benevolence, and their course vindicated by arguments and propositions which in the abstract no one can deny. But however fascinating may be the dress with which their schemes are presented to their fellow-citizens; with whatever purity of intention they may have been formed and sustained, they will be found to carry in their train mischief to the whole Union, and horrors to a large portion of it, which it is probable some of the projectors and many of their supporters have never thought of; the latter, the first in the series of evils, which are to spring from this source, are such as you have read of to have been perpetrated on the fair plains of Italy and Gaul by the Scythian hordes of Attila and Alaric, and such as most of you apprehended on that memorable night, when the tomahawks and war clubs of the followers of Tecumseh were rattling in your suburbs. I regard not the disavowals of any such intention upon the part of the authors of these schemes, since, upon the examination of the publications which have been made, they will be found to contain every fact and every argument which would have been used if such had been their objects. I am certain that there is not in this assembly one of these deluded men, and that there are few within the bounds of the State. If there are any, I would earnestly entreat them to forbear, to pause in their career, and deliberately consider the consequences of their conduct to the whole Union, to the States more immediately interested, and to those for whose benefit they profess to act. That the latter will be the victims of the weak, injudicious, presumptuous, and *unconstitutional* efforts to secure them, a thorough examination of the subject must convince them. The struggle (and struggle there must be) may commence with horrors such as I have described, but it will end with more firmly riveting the chains, or in the utter extirpation of those whose cause they advocate. Am I wrong, fellow-citizens, in applying the terms weak, presumptuous, and unconstitutional to the measures of the emancipators? A slight examination will, I think, show that I am not. In a vindication of the objects of a convention which was lately held in one of the towns of Ohio, which I saw in a newspaper, it was said that nothing more was intended than to produce a state of public feeling which would lead to an amendment of the constitution, authorizing the abolition of slavery in the United States. Now, can an amendment of the constitution be effected without the consent of the Southern States? What, then, is the proposition to be submitted to them? It is this. The present provisions of



the constitution secure to you the right (a right which you held before it was made, and which you have never given up) to manage your domestic concerns in your own way; but as we are convinced that you do not manage them properly, we want you to put in the hands of the General Government, in the councils of which we have the majority, the control over these matters, the effect of which will be virtually to transfer the power from yours into other hands. Again, in some of the States, and in sections of others, the black population far exceeds that of the white. Some of the emancipators propose an immediate abolition. What is the proposition then as it regards those States and parts of States, but the alternative of amalgamation with the blacks, or an exchange of situations with them? Is there any man of common sense who does not believe that the emancipated blacks, being a majority, will not insist upon a full participation of the political rights with the whites, and, when possessed of these, that they will not contend for a full share of the social rights also? What but the extremity of weakness and folly could induce any one to think that such propositions as these could be listened to by a people so intelligent as those of the Southern States? Further, the emancipators generally declare that it is their intention to effect their object (although their acts contradict the assertion) by no other means than by convincing the slave holders that the immediate emancipation of the slaves is called for both by moral obligation and sound policy. An unfledged youth at the moment of his leaving (indeed, in many instances before he has left) his Theological Seminary, undertakes to give lectures upon morals to the countrymen of Wythe, Tucker, Pendleton, and Lowndes, and lessons of political wisdom to States whose affairs have so recently been directed by Jefferson and Madison, Macon and Crawford. Is it possible that instances of greater vanity and presumption could be exhibited?

“But the course pursued by the emancipators is unconstitutional. I do not say that there are any words in the constitution which forbid such discussions as they say they are engaged in. I know that there are not. And there is even an article which secures to the citizens the right to express and publish their opinions without restriction. But in the construction of the constitution it is always necessary to refer to the circumstances under which it was formed, and to ascertain its meaning by a comparison of its provisions with each other, and with the previous situation of the several States who were parties to it. In a portion of these slavery was recognised, and they took care to have the right secured to them to follow and reclaim such of them as were fugitives to other States. The laws of Congress passed under this power have provided punishment to any who shall oppose or interrupt the exercise of this right. Now, can any one believe that the instrument which contains a provision of this kind, which authorizes a master to pursue his slave into another State, take him back, and promises a punishment for any citizen or citizens of that State who should oppose him, should at the same time authorize the latter to assemble together, to pass resolutions and adopt addresses, not only to encourage the slaves to leave their masters, but to cut their throats before they do so? I insist that, if the citizens of the non-slaveholding States can avail themselves of the article of the constitution which prohibits the restriction of speech or the press to publish any thing injurious to the rights of the slaveholding States,



they can go to the extreme that I have mentioned, and effect any thing further which writing or speaking could effect. But, fellow-citizens, these are not the principles of the constitution. Such a constitution would defeat one of the great objects of its formation, which was that of securing the peace and harmony of the States which were parties to it. The liberty of speech and of the press were given as the most effectual means to preserve to each and every citizen their own rights, and to the States the rights which appertained to them at the time of its adoption.

“It could never have been expected that it would be used by the citizens of one portion of the States for the purpose of depriving those of another portion of the rights which they had reserved at the adoption of the constitution, and in the exercise of which none but themselves have any concern or interest. If slavery be an evil, (and no one more readily acknowledges it than I do,) the evil is with them. If there is guilt in it, the guilt is theirs, not ours, since neither the States where it does not exist, nor the Government of the United States, can, without usurpation of power and the violation of a solemn compact, do any thing to remove it, without the consent of those who are immediately interested. With that consent, there is not a man in the whole world who would more willingly contribute his aid to accomplish it than I would. If my vote could effect it, every surplus dollar in the Treasury should be appropriated to that object. But they will neither ask for aid nor consent to be aided, so long as the illegal, persecuting, and dangerous movements are in progress of which I complain; the interest of all concerned requires that these should be immediately stopped. This can only be done by the force of public opinion, and that cannot too soon be brought into operation. Every movement which is made by the abolitionists in the non-slaveholding States is viewed by our Southern brethren as an attack upon their rights, and which, if persisted in, must in the end eradicate those feelings of attachment and affection between the citizens of all the States which was produced by a community of interests and dangers in the war of the Revolution, which was the foundation of our happy Union, and by a continuance of which it can alone be preserved. I entreat you then, fellow-citizens, to frown upon the measures which are to produce results so much to be deprecated.”

Without entering into a full detail of the merits of the gentleman at the head of this Government, I turn to the supporters of the administration, and ask them, if they please, to show me wherein the present Chief Magistrate of this Union ever held such language as this? Has he ever declared that the abolition of slavery would be unconstitutional? On the contrary, has he not declared and admitted that, with the lights before him, he could not say but that it might be abolished? Has he ever said that the “efforts” of these petitioners were “*weak, injudicious, presumptuous, and unconstitutional?*” Has he ever “entreated them to pause in their career?” No man can answer in the affirmative to these questions for Martin Van Buren, with truth and sincerity. What has he said—what has he done? “Let us render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.” In that great and truly alarming agitation of the question of slavery as regards the State of Missouri, Mr. Van Buren proved, by his vote, that he



was opposed to slavery ; and not only that he was opposed, but that he would refuse to admit a State into the Union, rather than that her people should judge and act for themselves on the question of slavery. He voted in the Legislature of New York to instruct an ultra federalist (Rufus King) to refuse the admission of Missouri into this Union if *her constitution* recognised slavery. I do not give the words of the resolution, but the substance.

Where was old Tippecanoe at that vastly important crisis in our affairs ? Side by side in this House with those that led the van in favor of slavery—side by side with the republicans of the South, he made a full and glorious sacrifice of himself for the people of Missouri. He voted to sustain her *constitutional* right of slavery, and was beaten out of Congress for the part he took in behalf of Southern interests and Southern institutions. Is the gentleman from Missouri in the House ? Oh, Missouri ! (Oh, Misery ! ) What has Mr. Van Buren done for you ?

If Mr. Van Buren had done as much for us as General Harrison, I would not hesitate to marshal myself in his ranks at once, as he *now* pretends to be so much of a State rights man ; but still I fear his measures. His message recommends strict economy, (good,) but he intimates very plainly that, after all the economy he recommends has been used by us, there will still be a deficit of revenue, and leaves us to infer, as I understand him, that more will be wanting. How we are to raise it under the plans in his message, without an increase of tariff duties, is not for me to say. The South may look out. I pass over many of his acts, and come down to his last public *act*, by which he *proves* himself to be *now* what he was in early life—the constant, uncompromising enemy of Southern institutions. I mean his vote in regard to slavery in Florida. On every occasion where he has *voted* on the question of slavery, he has voted against it.

*Extract from the Senate Journal.*

“ The Senate resumed, as in Committee of the Whole, the consideration of the bill for the establishment of a Territorial Government in Florida ; and the bill having been amended, it was reported to the House accordingly ; and,

“ On the question to concur in the amendment to the 11th section, to *strike out*, after the word ‘ freedom,’ in the 14th line thereof, the residue of said section, as follows :

“ ‘ No slave or slaves shall, directly or indirectly be introduced into the said Territory, except by a citizen of the United States removing into the said Territory for actual settlement, and being, at the time of such removal, bona fide owner of such slave or slaves ; or any citizen of the United States travelling into the said Territory, with any servant or servants, not exceeding two, and every slave imported or brought into the said Territory contrary to the provisions of this act, shall, thereupon, be entitled to and receive his or her freedom.’

“ It was determined in the affirmative : Yeas 23, nays 20.

“ On motion by Mr. Mills, the yeas and nays being desired by one-fifth of the Senators present,



“Those who voted in the affirmative are—

“Messrs. Barbour, Benton, Brown of Louisiana, D’Wolf, Eaton, Elliott, Gailard, Holmes of Mississippi, Johnson of Kentucky, Johnson of Louisiana, King of Alabama, Lloyd, Macon, Noble, Pleasants, Smith, Southard, Stokes, Van Dyke, Walker, Ware, Williams of Mississippi, Williams of Tennessee.

“Those who voted in the negative are—

“Messrs. Barton, Boardman, Brown of Ohio, Chandler, Dickerson, Findlay, Holmes of Maine, King of New York, Knight, Lanman, Lowrie, Mills, Morrill, Otis, Palmer, Parrott, Ruggles, Seymour, Thomas, VAN BUREN.”

The enemies of Mr. Van Buren have denied him one quality which he possesses in an eminent degree—that of courage. In “treading in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor,” he has exhibited no signs of faltering. A sovereign State has gone by the board, and he shows no signs of alarm. General Jackson, in his prime, never dared to do a deed so bold. Hundreds and thousands of American citizens have been disfranchised by an Executive edict, issued, no doubt, in secret, to be carried into effect by the Clerk of this House, and the party *here*, by which a State loses five out of six of her Representatives, for the sole purpose of giving the President and his party the power to rule this House, and through the action of this House to secure his re-election. Is not this a monstrous usurpation? Has history any parallel? Tyrants have dissolved legislative bodies by force of arms, but here the President wills it, and it is done almost without a struggle.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it, and I repeat it here, elected as I was by the State rights party of Georgia to a seat in this House, on the principle that I stood in *opposition* to this administration—elected by a party opposed to Mr. Van Buren—opposed to measures enumerated by me in this effort in behalf of my constituents as belonging to him—I cannot consent to be counted among those who follow his administration, and I seek this early opportunity to “define my position,” that I may not be suspected by any man living.

A man like me, Mr. Speaker, who has ever been accustomed to roam at large in the beautiful forests of his own, his native land, uncontrolled even by parental authority, cannot submit to be harnessed with the shackles of party, and collared with Van Burenism. No, sir; no, sir. I will go against this administration as long as it goes wrong, and when it goes right I will go home.

[Some member replied, you will remain here a long time, my dear sir.]

If I were compelled to take sides in the contest between William Henry Harrison and Martin Van Buren, I would not hesitate to support the man who declared in 1835 that the conduct of the abolitionists was “*weak, injudicious, presumptuous, and unconstitutional* ;” and that, too, in a non-slaveholding State, and to a non-slaveholding people. The man who stood by Missouri—the General who protected the great valley of the Mississippi by his deeds of valor, and secured to its inhabitants peace and protection in place of danger and



alarm—such a man is General Harrison. And if I were to conceal my preference for him over Mr. Van Buren, I should act uncandidly to my friends, and dishonestly with myself. He pronounced the efforts of the abolitionists *unconstitutional*. I am proud to call his opinion to aid my own. Hence I say, refuse to receive these abominable petitions, and disregard these fanatics.

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